

Some Historical Reflections on War, Past and Present

Being portions of two Annual Presidential Addresses
delivered to the British Academy
June 1915 and July 1916

By

Viscount Bryce

President of the Academy

London

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE following pages contain the two annual presidential addresses delivered in 1915 and 1916 to the British Academy, with the omission of those parts which related to the work done by the Academy itself during the two years preceding, viz. the undertakings it directs, the papers read before it, and the lectures delivered on the foundations it administers, together with the obituary notices of Fellows deceased. These general portions of the two addresses are published by the desire of the Council of the British Academy, which has considered that the historical observations and reflections presented in them may have an interest for readers beyond the circle of its own body.

References to current politics, national or international, are necessarily absent, because those topics lie outside the scope of the Academy's functions, and are never discussed at its meetings.

November 1, 1916.

I

ADDRESS DELIVERED JUNE 30, 1915

IN the scantiness of a record of work done in the fields which the Academy cultivates, it might be expected that I should offer to you some remarks on the war itself, the causes that produced it, the antagonisms, deeper than most people supposed, which it has revealed, and the changes it is likely to involve. But many of you will have felt, and all will admit, the dangers that surround any one who, influenced by strong emotions and possessing imperfect knowledge, should now commit to print his judgement of the events of the last eleven months. Every one among us must sometimes have had cause to regret, when reading them years afterwards, words which he wrote in the heat of the moment. Time modifies our judgements as it cools our passions. Neither the friendships nor the enmities of nations are exempt from change. You remember how Ajax, in the drama of Sophocles, says that he has learnt

ὁ τ' ἐχθρὸς ἡμῶν ἐς τοσόνδ' ἐχθαρτέος
ὥς καὶ φιλήσων αἰθίς.

It is better that nothing should be said to-day in an address to the Academy which any one of its members, to whatever country he may belong, would feel pain in reading ten or twenty years hence. Newspapers and pamphlets will convey to posterity sufficiently, and even more than sufficiently, the notions and fancies and passions of the moment.

What we may do, not without profit, is to note and to set down in a spirit of detachment the impressions made upon us by the events which our eyes see and watch as they pass into history. Many a pen will for centuries to come be occupied by the events of this year, and endless controversies will arise over them. It is well that whoever has gained from his studies something of an historical sense should in an historical spirit place on record from month to month the impressions he receives. The record will be almost as useful if the impressions should turn out to be erroneous as if they should be confirmed by subsequent events, because what the historian of the future will desire to know is not only what happened but what people

believed and thought at the time it was happening. That which is omitted has also its value. Fifty years hence men will be struck by the significance of things whose significance was not perceived by contemporary observers, and will seek to know why those observers failed to see or comprehend facts which will then stand out in bold relief.

So let me now try to enumerate briefly what are the facts of the present situation by which we are chiefly impressed—facts that make it novel as well as terrible.

The first fact is the immense width and range of the war. Thucydides observed that men always thought the war they were then engaged in the greatest that had ever befallen. But here we have facts which show how much the present conflict does transcend any seen in previous ages. This might have been foretold twenty years ago, assuming that Russia, Germany, and Britain were involved, seeing how vast are the possessions and claims and ambitions of all three States. Yet the reality goes far beyond every forecast. All the six great European Powers and four lesser Powers are involved.¹ So is the whole extra-European Old World, except China and Persia and the possessions of Holland and Portugal. In the New World it is only the Dominions and Colonies of Britain that are affected—a noteworthy illustration of the severance of the Western hemisphere from the broils of the Eastern.

Secondly, there is the prodigious influence of the war upon neutral nations. This also might have been foreseen as a result of the development of world commerce and the interlockings of world finance. But here too the actual results are transcending expectation.

Thirdly, the changes in the methods and character of war have been far more extensive than in any previous period. It took much more than two centuries from the invention of gunpowder for musketry and artillery to supersede completely archery and defensive armour. The long pike, after having been used for some twenty-five centuries at least, was still in use as late as the Irish Rebellion of 1798, and to a slight extent in the abortive rising of 1848. War, however, is now a totally different thing from what it was in the campaign of 1870–71, or even in the war between Russia and Japan of 1904. Chemistry has changed everything by increasing the range and the power of missiles, while electricity, without the wire, supplies new means of communication not only along battle lines but across hostile territory. Warfare in the air and warfare under the sea were heretofore undreamt of.

¹ Since this was written three other European Powers have entered the war. The Portuguese colonies have also become involved.

Fourthly. The cost of war is greater in proportion to the size of armies, immensely larger as these armies are, than it ever was before. The ten belligerent European Powers are estimated to be spending now more than ten millions sterling a day. At this rate their total expenditure for twelve months could not be less than 4,000 millions, and may be much more. But some competent economists put it at 5,000 millions, figures which are hardly more realizable by us than are those which express the distances of the fixed stars.

Fifthly. In each nation the whole body of the people is more fully and more hotly interested in, and united by, this war than by any it ever waged before. During the eighteenth century it was in most countries only the monarch and the ruling class that knew or cared what was happening. The great European conflict that began in 1793 brought a change. But this war is far more intensely national, in the sense that it has roused the feelings of the whole of each people from top to bottom, than any preceding conflict, and it is everywhere waged with a sterner purpose. In this respect we are reminded of the citizen wars of the small city-states of ancient Greece and Italy, and of the Italian Middle Ages.

Sixthly. Some grave moral issues have been raised more sharply than before. Is a state above morality? Does the plea of military necessity (of which the State itself is apparently to be the judge) entitle it to disregard the rights of other states? (Cf. Thucydides v. 84-113, the case of Melos.)

Seventhly. The predictions that the vast interests involved, the increasing strength of defence as opposed to attack, and the growth of a general pacific sentiment, would avert strife have all proved fallacious. The wisdom of the wise, where is it now? Some twelve years ago Jean de Bloch, in a book that made a great impression at the time, argued that the growing difficulties of conducting military operations on a very large scale might prove an effective deterrent. Many supposed that the great financiers would be able to avert hostilities. More recently an accomplished and persuasive English writer has shown how much more a nation has to lose by war than it can possibly gain even if victory crown its arms. Others have thought that a sense of solidarity among the workers in each industrial country would be strong enough to restrain their governments from any but a purely defensive war. Others, again, have declared that democracies are essentially peaceful, because the mass of the people pay in their blood, other classes merely in their wealth. I do not say that these arguments are unsound, but the forces they rely upon have not proved strong enough for the occasion. For

practical purposes the wisdom of the wise has been brought to naught, because the rulers of the nations have been guided by other motives than those of pure reason.

These observations relate to the palpable facts we have witnessed. Let us turn now to some of the reflections which the facts suggest. It is not easy to express these with that cold detachment at which the historian is bound to aim; but the effort must be made.

On that reflection which rose first to our minds when the war began, and which continues to be the sombre background to every aspect it presents—upon this I will not pause. After more than forty centuries of civilization and nineteen centuries of Christianity, mankind—in this case more than half mankind—is settling its disputes in the same way as mankind did in the Stone Age. The weapons are more various and more destructive. They are the latest product of highly developed science. But the spirit and the result are the same.

There has never been a time in which communications were so easy, and the means for discovering and circulating information so abundant. Yet how little is now certainly known as to the real causes which have brought about the war. The beliefs current among different peoples are altogether different, not to say contradictory. Some are almost demonstrably false. Even in some neutral nations such as Holland, Switzerland, and Spain, opinion is sharply divided not merely about the rights but also about the facts. The whole German people seem to hold just as implicitly that this is for them a defensive war as the French hold the opposite; and however clear the main points may appear to us in Britain, there are others which may remain obscure for many years to come.

How few are the persons in every State in whose hands lie the issues of war and peace! In some of the now belligerent countries the final and vital decisions were taken by four or five persons only, in others by six or seven only. Even in Britain decision rested practically with less than twenty-five, for though some few persons outside the Cabinet took a part, not all within the Cabinet are to be reckoned as effective factors. It is of course true that popular sentiment has to be considered, even in States more or less despotically governed. Against a strong and definite sentiment of the masses the ruling few would not venture to act. But the masses are virtually led by a few, and their opinion is formed, particularly at a crisis, by the authority and the appeals of those few whom they have been accustomed to trust or to obey. And

after all, the vital decision at the vital moment remains with the few. If they had decided otherwise than they did, the thing would not have happened. Something like it might have happened later, but the war would not have come then and so.

How swiftly do vast events move, how quickly are vast decisions taken! In the twelve fatal days from July 23 to August 4 there was no time for reflection. Telegrams between seven capitals flew hither and thither like swift arrows crossing one another, and it would have needed a mind of more than human amplitude and energy to grasp and correlate all the issues involved and to foresee the results that would follow the various lines of action possible in a game so complicated. Even the intellect of a Caesar or a Bonaparte would have been unequal to the task. Here the telegraph has worked for evil. Had the communications passed by written dispatches, as they would have done eighty years ago, it is probable that war might have been avoided.

Sometimes one feels as if modern States were growing too huge for the men to whom their fortunes are committed. Mankind increases in volume, and in accumulated knowledge, and in a comprehension of the forces of nature ; but the intellects of individual men do not grow. The power of grasping and judging in their entirety the far greater mass of facts to be dealt with, the far more abundant resources at command, the far vaster issues involving the weal or woe of masses of men—this power does not expand. The disproportion between the individual ruling men with their personal prejudices and proclivities, their selfish interests and their vanities, and the immeasurable consequences which follow their individual volitions, becomes more striking and more tragic. There were some advantages in the small city-states of antiquity. A single city might decline or perish, but the nation remained ; and another city blossomed forth to replace that which had withered away. But now enormous nations are concentrated under one government and its disasters affect the whole. A great modern State is like a gigantic vessel built without any watertight compartments, which, if it be unskilfully steered, may perish when it strikes a single rock.

How ignorant modern peoples, with all the abundant means of information at their disposal, may nevertheless remain of one another's character and purposes ! Each of the nations now at war has evidently had a false notion of its adversaries and has been thereby misled. It has not known their inner thoughts, it has misread their policy. It was said in the days of the American Civil War that the misconception by the Southern States of the Northern States,

and their belief that the North cared for nothing but the dollar, was the real cause why their differences were not peaceably settled, and yet they were both members of the same Republic and spoke the same language. European nations cannot be expected to have quite so intimate a knowledge each of the other, yet both their commercial intercourse and the activity of the press and the immensely increased volume of private travel might have been expected to enable them better to gauge and judge one another's minds.

Historians as far back as Thucydides have made upon the behaviour of nations in war time many general observations, which have been brought out in stronger light by what passes from day to day before us. A few of these I will mention to suggest how we may turn to account the illustrations which Europe now furnishes.

When danger threatens a nation its habits change. Defence becomes the supreme need. In place of the ordinary machinery of government there starts up a dictatorship like that of early Rome, when twenty-four lictors surrounded the magistrate and the tribunician veto, with the right of appeal, sank away. The plea of public interest overrides everything. The suspension of constitutional guarantees is acquiesced in, and acts of arbitrary power, even if violent, are welcomed because taken as signs of strength in the ruler. Even the withholding of information is submitted to. The voice of criticism is silenced. *Cedit toga armis*. The soldier comes to the front, speaks with an authority greater than that of the civilian statesman, is permitted to do whatever he declares to be necessary for the nation's safety. So long as that is secured, everything else is pardoned, and success gives enormous prestige.

Whoever watches these things must see how dangerous to freedom is war, except in those communities where long tradition has rooted constitutional habit very deep. In old Greece seditions opened the way to the Tyrant. Napoleon supposed that the Duke of Wellington would, after Waterloo, have made himself master of England. So might a victor of another quality have done who had achieved such a triumph as Wellington's, had not an ancient monarchy and Parliament stood in his way. War is the bane of democracies. If it be civil war, he who restores peace is acclaimed like Augustus. Even a Louis Napoleon may be welcome when he promises security for property. If it be foreign war, the man of the sword on horseback towers over the man on foot who can only talk and administer.

So those psychological phenomena which former observers have noticed when a country is swept by war or revolution, have become vividly real to Europe now. The same passion seizes on

every one simultaneously and grows hotter in each by the sense that others share it. It is said that when sheep, feeding unherded on a mountain, see the approach of a danger they all huddle together, the rams on the outside facing the foe. The flock becomes one, with one mind, one fear, one rage of fear. So in times of danger a human community feels and acts like one man. The nation realizes itself so vividly that it becomes a law to itself and reckes little of the opinion of others. The man is lost in the crowd, and the crowd feels rather than thinks. Passion intensified supercedes the ordinary exercise not only of individual will but even of individual reason. Fear and anger breed suspicion and credulity. Every one is ready to believe the worst of whoever is suspected. What is called the power of suggestion rises to such a height that to denounce a man is virtually to condemn him. Lavoisier is sentenced to be guillotined; he pleads that he is a harmless chemist, but is told that the Republic does not need chemists. After the death of Julius Caesar, Cinna, the poet, is seized, and when he protests that he is not Cinna the conspirator is nevertheless killed for his name, the bystander (in Shakespeare) adding, 'Kill him for his bad verses'. A foreign name is taken to be evidence that its bearer is a spy. Grotesquely absurd charges find credence. There is no tolerance for difference of opinion, and to advance arguments against the reigning sentiment is treason. Any tribute to the character or even to the intellectual gifts of an enemy is resented. Sentiments of humanity towards him are disapproved, unless the precaution is taken of expressing these in the exact words of Holy Scripture. The rising flame of hatred involves not merely the government and armies of the enemy but even the innocent citizens of the hostile country. These well-known phenomena are all more or less visible in Europe to-day, though in our own country the coolness of our temperament and the fact that no invader has trodden our soil have been presenting them in a comparatively mild type.

The intensification of emotions includes those of a religious kind, and these not always in their purest form. In most countries, it is only the most enlightened minds that can refrain from claiming the Deity as their peculiar protector and taking every victory as a mark of His special favour. Modern man seems at such moments to have reverted to those primitive ages when each tribe fought for its own god and expected its own god to fight for it, as Moab called on Chemosh and Tyre on Melkarth. True it is that a nation now usually argues that Divine protection will be extended to it because its cause is just.

But as this is announced by every nation alike, the result is much the same now as it was in the days of Chemosh and Melkarth. Oddly enough, the people in whom fanaticism used to be strongest are now responding more feebly than ever before to the appeal of the *Jihād*. Is it because the Turkish Mussulmans have infidel Powers for allies as well as for enemies that this war seems to them less holy than those of the centuries in which their conquests were won?

Upon other symptoms indicating a return to the conditions of warfare in earlier ages I forbear (for a reason already given) to comment. It is more pleasant to note that some of the virtues which war evokes have never been seen to more advantage. Man has not under civilization degenerated in body or in will-power. The valour and self-sacrifice shown by the soldiers of all the nations have been as conspicuous as ever before. The line of heroes that extends from Thermopylae to Lucknow might welcome as brothers the warriors of to-day, while among those at home who have been suffering the loss of sons and brothers dearer to them than life itself, there has been a dignity of patience and silent resignation worthy of Roman Stoics or Christian saints.

In these and other similar ways we see many a feature of human character, many a phase of political or religious life recorded by historians, verified by present experience. We can better understand what nations become at moments of extreme peril and supreme effort; and those of us who occupy ourselves with history find it profitable to note the Present for the illumination of the Past.

But the Future makes a wider appeal. Every one feels that after the war we shall see a different world, but no one can foretell what sort of a world it will be. We all have our fancies, but we know them to be no more than fancies, for the possibilities are incalculable. Nevertheless it is worth while for each of us to set down what are the questions as to the future which most occupy the public mind and his own mind.

Will the effect of this war be to inflame or to damp down the military spirit? Some there are who believe that the example of those States which had made vast preparations for war will be henceforth followed by all States, so far as their resources permit, and that everywhere armies will be larger, navies larger, artillery accumulated on a larger scale, so that whatever peace may come will be only a respite and breathing-time, to be followed by further conflicts till the predominance of one State or one race is established. Other observers of a more sanguine temper conceive that the outraged sentiment of mankind will compel the rulers of nations to find some means of averting war in the future more effective

than diplomacy has proved. Each view is held by men of wide knowledge and solid judgement : and for each strong arguments can be adduced.

The effects which the war will have on the government and politics of the contending countries are equally obscure, though every one admits they are sure to be far-reaching. Those who talk of politics as a science may well pause when they reflect how little the experience of the past enables us to forecast the future of government, let us say in Germany or in Russia, on the hypothesis either of victory or of defeat for one or other Power.

Economics approaches more nearly to the character of a science than does any other department of inquiry in the human as opposed to the physical subjects. Yet the economic problems before us are scarcely less dark than the political. How long will it take the great countries to repair the losses they are now suffering ? The destruction of capital has been greater during these last eleven months than ever before in so short a period, and it goes on with increasing rapidity. It took nearly two centuries for Germany to recover from the devastations of the Thirty Years' War, and nearly forty years from the end of the Civil War had elapsed before the wealth of the Southern States of America had come back to the figures of 1860. One may expect recovery to be much swifter in our days, but the extinction of millions of productive brains and hands cannot fail to retard the process, and each of the trading countries will suffer by the impoverishment of the others.

This suggests the gravest of all the questions that confront us. How will population be affected in quantity and in quality ? The birth-rate had before 1914 been falling in Germany and Britain : it had already so fallen in France as only to equal the death-rate. Will the withdrawal of those slain or disabled in war quicken it ? and how long will it take to restore the productive industrial capacity of each country ? More than half the students and younger teachers in some of our Universities have gone to fight abroad : and many of these will never return. Who can estimate what is being lost to literature and learning and science, from the deaths of those whose strong and cultivated intelligence might have made great discoveries or added to the store of the world's thought ? Those who are now perishing belong to the most healthy and vigorous part of the population, from whom the strongest progeny might have been expected. Will the physical and mental energy of the generation that will come to manhood thirty or forty years hence show a decline ? The data for a forecast are scanty, for in no previous war has the loss of life been

so great over Europe as a whole, even in proportion to a population very much larger than it was a century ago. It is said, I know not with how much truth, that the stature and physical strength of the population of France took long to recover from the losses of the wars that lasted from 1793 till 1814. Niebuhr thought that the population of the Roman Empire never recovered from the great plague of the second century A.D., but where it is disease that reduces a people, it is the weaker who die, while in war it is the stronger. Our friends of the Eugenics Society are uneasy at the prospect for the belligerent nations. Some of them are trying to console themselves by dwelling on the excellent moral effects that may spring out of the stimulation which war gives to the human spirit. What the race loses in body it may—so they hope—regain in soul. This is a highly speculative anticipation, on which history casts no certain light. As to the exaltation of character which war service produces in those who fight from noble motives, inspired by faith in the justice of their cause, there can be no doubt. We see it to-day as it has often been seen before. But how far does this affect the non-combatant part of each people? and how long does the exaltation last? The instance nearest to our own time, and an instance which is in so far typical that the bulk of the combatants on both sides were animated by a true patriotic spirit, is the instance of the American War of Secession. It was felt at the time to be almost a moral rebirth of the nation. I must not venture here and now to inquire how far the hopes then expressed were verified by the result: for such an inquiry would detain you too long.

These are some of the questions which it may be interesting to set down as rising in our minds now, in order that the next generation may the better realize what were the thoughts and anxieties of those who sought, *sine ira, metu, studio*, to comprehend the larger issues of this fateful time. It is too soon to hope to solve the problems that are crowding upon us. But we can at least try to see clearly what the problems are, and to distinguish between the permanent and the temporary, the moral and the material causes that have plunged mankind in this abyss of calamity: and we can ask one another what are the forces that may help to deliver it therefrom. This is a time for raising questions, not for attempting to answer them. Before some of them can be answered, most of us who are met here to-day will have followed across the deep River of Forgetfulness those who are now giving their lives that Britain may live.

II

ADDRESS DELIVERED JULY 14, 1916

A YEAR ago, in the annual Presidential address, I mentioned and commended to your reflection a number of phenomena which the war had displayed and which deserved to be noted by historians, because they cast light on divers features of previous wars. To-day I will refer to some other such facts; and in mentioning these, will endeavour to observe that well settled rule which in this Academy forbids references to questions of current politics. It is a wholesome rule, for one who should depart from it might easily be betrayed, under the influence of a natural passion, into words that would afterwards be regretted.

One of these phenomena is the shock given to the rules of international law. Some of the principles that had been thought best established have been virtually destroyed. To use an Aeschylean phrase, they have been pierced with as many wounds as a net. It has become clear that there are Governments which when they see advantage to be gained by taking a certain course, will not be deterred from it by rules of morality or law. Nations, and especially the Powers that are neutral, are asking whether there is any use in passing such rules unless some method can be devised for enforcing them. Is it worth while, when the war has ended, to attempt a reconstruction of the fabric of international law unless it can be rebuilt upon far firmer foundations? In war time, it is only the action of neutrals that can effectively punish a belligerent transgressor. Is there any reason to look for such action? One series of breaches in that law is especially deplorable. The respect for the rights of non-combatant civilians which had been consecrated by many years of practice, and which represented the greatest mitigation of the savagery inherent in war that the progress of civilization had effected, has now disappeared. We seem to have gone back to the brutality of the earlier Middle Ages. May this be partly due to the system of what is called 'The Nation in Arms'? If all the men of a country are set to fight, do they form the habit of thinking not only of all the men but also of the women and children in enemy countries as enemies to whom no mercy is to be shown? With the increase of such cruelties hatred also has grown. It is fiercer between the warring peoples than ever before. In both these respects our

own soldiers have (as we believe) been so far blameless. But one must desire that the strain should not last too long.

The power of a Government to keep its subjects in ignorance of the facts of a war, political as well as military, has never seemed so complete. This is all the more wonderful in days when the means of learning facts through the press are so much more abundant than ever before. It is a regrettable fact, because it prevents the public opinion of a people from acting as it ought upon its Government. A remarkable instance of this ignorance came lately to my knowledge. No single incident of the last two years has made so great an impression as the destruction by a torpedo of the passenger ship *Lusitania*. Now a medal was struck in Germany and has been widely distributed there—whether or no by the German Government I have been unable to ascertain—which represents the *Lusitania* sinking in the ocean. Her fore part is piled high with cannons and aeroplanes and other war material. Here we see a warning given to the historian who has been apt to rely upon the evidence of works of art contemporaneous with the events they depict. Suppose that five centuries hence few other records of the events of May, 1915, have survived, and that this medal is then dug up from some ruin. It would be appealed to as affording the best kind of proof that the *Lusitania*, which carried no cannons and no aeroplanes, was a vessel not only laden but conspicuously overladen with munitions of war.

There has never before been a conflict in which such efforts were made by belligerents to win the favour of neutrals. Able agents have been employed and immense sums expended in attempts to form public opinion through the press. Such efforts have of course been primarily directed towards inducing neutrals to take some measure either positively friendly to the belligerent Power conducting the propaganda or to dissuade it from some measure helpful to that Power's enemies. In this, however, there is implied a tribute to the importance of the opinion of the world at large, and a recognition of the fact that there is such a thing as a moral standard which a nation, even if it deems itself absolved by the law of necessity from obedience to such a standard, knows to constitute the basis whereon the judgement of neutrals will be founded.

The ethical problems which this war has raised are not new, but in their essence, and sometimes even in their form, at least as old as the fifth century B.C., when we find them discussed in ancient Athens. But they have been presented on a larger scale, and in a sharper way, than perhaps ever before, and the differences between the standard recognized as applicable to the individual and that fit to be prescribed

for the State have been, in one country, worked out more thoroughly as parts of a general system of doctrine. It is now asked, Have States, in their international relations, any morality at all? or are they towards one another merely like so many wild beasts, owning no obligations of honour or good faith? Is self-preservation the highest law of a State's being, entitling it to destroy its neighbour whenever it conceives this to be the easiest way to save itself? If the State has any conscience, any morality, what is that morality? How far does it differ from the moral principles which are either embodied in the law, or recognized by the opinion, of each community as applicable to individual citizens within a State? If State morality is lower than the morality of the individual, ought it to be raised; and if so, how can it be raised?

If there has been a retrogression, can this be connected with the substitution of the State as an impersonal entity for the monarch as a person? In the sixteenth century the monarch, if he was not personally a base creature, had a certain sense of honour, and was amenable not only to the censures of the Church but to the dictates of chivalry, which (though chivalry never was quite what romancers have painted it) had still a certain influence. When the Emperor Charles the Fifth put himself in the power of Francis the First of France, who had been his enemy (and indeed his prisoner) before, and was to be his enemy again, he reckoned, and not in vain, upon that sense of chivalry. Francis himself was not the best kind of knight, but he had been the sovereign and the friend of Bayard, the pattern of all knightly virtue. Is any trace of that spirit of chivalry left in our time? Or do those who now administer a State feel themselves to be like the soulless directors of an incorporated company as compared with the individual landlord or employer of former days, who recognized a sort of quasi-feudal responsibility for those who tilled his lands or worked at his bidding?

All these are serious questions, and serious not for States only, seeing that the individual may come to think that the morality which is good enough for the State is good enough for himself.

From noting these phenomena I pass on to a still wider question.

The awful scale of the present war, both in its local extension over the globe and in the volume of ruin and suffering which it is causing, inevitably suggests the question: Is this 'latest birth of Time' to be taken as the last result of civilization? Must we contemplate catastrophes such as that we now see as being likely from time to time to recur? Is a future of incessant hatred between peoples, or groups of peoples, disposing them to inflict economic injury on one another in

time of peace, and breaking out from time to time in efforts to destroy one another in time of war, the future to which mankind, far more numerous than ever before, and better provided than ever before with every material comfort and luxury, must henceforth look forward?

This is a question which has been constantly present to our minds for the last two years. It includes three questions:

(1. What have been the chief causes of war in the past? Are they diminishing or increasing? Will they further diminish or increase?

(2. Are there any and what forces discernible that may tend to counterwork the causes which lead to war; and if so, are these forces that work for peace likely to grow?

(3. Can any international machinery be contrived calculated to reduce the strength of the forces that make for war and to strengthen those that make for peace?

As you have all been reflecting on these questions, it is not likely that I shall be able to suggest any new facts or thoughts which may not have already crossed your minds. All I can do is to try to construct a sort of framework into which your ideas may be fitted, or, in other words, to bring up for consideration certain specific points, so that definite issues may stand out, and thinking be so far clarified.

In following the stream of history downwards from its dim and distant sources one finds it to be a record of practically incessant fighting. Some races are fiercer than others. But War is the rule, Peace the rare exception. Plato said that war was the natural relation between States. So it had been before him, so it has been since. Tribes fought, cities fought, despotic monarchies fought, tiny republics fought, as vast empires are fighting to-day. This was so from the very beginning of our records. The monuments of Egypt and Assyria are devoted to war and to worship—generally to both, for the warrior king is represented as aided by the national gods who give him victory and receive their share of the spoils. So it was down through the ancient world and through the Middle Ages.

Intervals of peace have been longer within the last two centuries, especially in Europe; but the wars that preceded and followed such intervals have been on a more terrible scale than those of earlier times. The wars of the French Revolution and those of Napoleon covered twenty-three years, with two very short respites. Since 1852 Europe has seen eight wars; and if there be added to these other wars in Asia, Africa, and America, not to speak of civil conflicts (one of which, in the United States, lasted four years), very few years can be found in which the clash of arms was not somewhere heard. Thus there is abundant material for enumerating the causes of war.

These causes may be classed as arising either out of material interests or out of sentiment. In most cases both causes have been operative, though often in unequal measure.

The causes of the former class include :

The desire for plunder, including the capture of women.

The desire for land or new settlements, as when the Teutonic tribes entered the Roman Empire in the fifth century, and the Slavonic tribes in the sixth and seventh.

Disputed successions, in which two or more claimants to a throne have dragged their subjects or followers into the strife.

Interests in the sphere of commerce and industry, as when one State desires to debar another from the trade of a region (as Spain tried to debar the English from South America), or to reduce another State to commercial vassalage, as Austria did in the case of Serbia. By a curious irony, wars of commerce were often waged in an ignorance of economic principles which made even success worthless.

To the other class, where the motive is one of passion or sentiment, may be assigned the following causes of war :

Revenge for some injury to a people or insult to a sovereign, or perhaps only for some defeat suffered in a previous conflict.

The desire of a monarch to win glory.

Religious animosity.

National animosity, due to previous quarrels, and perhaps increased by racial dislike.

Sympathy (usually grounded on religious or racial affinities) with a section of the subjects of another State who are believed to be oppressed by it.

National pride or vanity.

Fear of an attack by another State. This includes what are called Preventive Wars, where a Power which thinks (or professes to think) itself endangered by the designs of another Power seeks to anticipate those designs by striking first.

Few wars can be referred entirely to one cause, and the presence of any one ground for collision naturally tends to intensify the influence of such other grounds as may exist.

Of these causes there is only one which has been almost eliminated. This is religious (or ecclesiastical) hatred. The desire to propagate a faith by the sword is no longer strong even in Islam, though attempts have been very recently made by the European allies of the Young Turks to utilize the preaching of a *Jihád* against the infidel. Among the so-called Christian States, religious antagonism survives only as a secondary source of enmity, disposing to civil strife or

international hostility communities which have been permeated by the traditions of ancient persecution. The sentiment of ecclesiastical unity has, moreover, sometimes contributed to strengthen the sense of a national unity, leading a people to believe in what it calls its mission.

The old desire for territory or booty has now passed from cattle-lifting on land and Vikingry at sea into the form of a desire for more and better colonies, and for a fuller control of the means of production and of the industrial high roads of commerce. The chieftain's thirst for fame appears in the desire to maintain the grandeur of a dynasty. But the ancient motives,—selfishness, rapacity, and vanity—are as strong as ever. In one sense they are even more formidable, because they are often shared by the masses of a nation, and inflamed by an agency more pervasive than any that existed before the telegraph had been added to the printing press.

Is there any one of these causes the disappearance whereof can be expected?

Religious passion has cooled, and ecclesiastical antagonisms may vanish, for the hold of dogmas and church organizations on men's minds has grown weaker. Yet the sort of fervour which expressed itself through those antagonisms, the desire in bodies of men to make other men think as they do, and so to resort to persecution if persuasion fails, may pass into new forms, and in them be again terrible. Of the other causes there is none which we have not seen active in our own time, some perhaps more active than ever before. Nearly all have, as affecting one or other of the now belligerent Powers, borne a part in bringing about the présent conflict. It is the gloomiest feature in the situation that to-day the interests and passions of peoples, and not merely those of monarchs or oligarchies, are engaged, for the enmities thus created are more lasting and pernicious. In the old days when philosophers used to ridicule the whims of a king who went to war to revenge a sneer or to provide an appanage for a younger son, the king might be appeased, and the war was sometimes closed by a royal wedding, but now the bitterness which conflict engenders remains to keep jealousy and suspicion alive for many a year. As Mephistopheles says in Goethe's *Faust*, 'the little god of the world bears always the same stamp'. Other things change. Knowledge increases and wealth increases, but human nature has remained, in essentials, much what it was thirty centuries ago.

It may be argued that we must not lay too much stress on the circumstances attending the outbreak of the present war, for the position was abnormal and unprecedented, and the conduct of some at

least of the belligerents is not to be construed as indicating a bellicose spirit. This argument has force, for it is not merely the action of each nation that has to be regarded, but also the temper and motives which determined that action. But after making all allowances the conclusion must be that the forces whence conflicts spring have never shown themselves stronger than in our own time. There is no sign of a diminution either in the spirit of rapacity or in the spirit of arrogance which moves those in whose hands lie the issues of war and peace, be they sovereigns or subjects. The sentiment of nationality, which in the days of Mazzini was deemed an almost unmixed good, has shown (and notably in South-Eastern Europe) that it can be darkened by national selfishness, jealousy, and pride.

So far then this brief review of the causes of war in the past gives little ground for hope.

We may now pass to the second question. Assuming, as the facts seem to indicate, that the causes which have induced war through the whole of history are still present and potent, can we discover any forces already counterworking them, and likely to strengthen in the future the motives that make for peace?

Four such forces have at various times inspired hope.

One is Religion. Of the three great World Religions, one, Islam, is essentially warlike, for it is the duty of every Musulman ruler to propagate the Faith by the sword. The other two are nominally pacific. Into the history of Buddhism I will not enter, except to remark that its practice has in all matters of State fallen so far short of its theory that theory has virtually counted for nothing. As to Christianity, it is enough to look back over the centuries since the Emperor Constantine. *Res ipsa loquitur.* What would be the thoughts of one of the Apostles, or of a martyr saint of the second century, who revisiting this planet to-day, should be told that the gospel he preached had overspread the world and was taken as their rule of life by nearly all of the nations on whose strife he looked down?

Are Christian principles more likely to influence the conduct of nations in the future than they have influenced it in the past? That question is as dark to-day as ever it was before. The lesson of ecclesiastical even more than of secular history is that the movements of thought and emotion and the changes they undergo are altogether unpredictable. Where there is an unlimited field of possibilities there is of course room for hope. Christianity is no doubt, at least in some countries, more of an influence making for peace than it was two centuries ago.

Another such force is democratic government. We are often told that so soon as the masses of the people—that is, the numerical majority of the voters—obtain in each nation the full control of its policy towards other nations, the old dynastic traditions that have so often prompted aggression will be eliminated, and the power of the military castes be destroyed. The suggestion is plausible, for the working people have in every country more to lose by war than any other class. They are the first to suffer in loss of employment as well as by slaughter in battle. That sense of class solidarity which has gone further among the wage-earners than in any other section of a nation—even if not nearly so far as had been expected—may dispose them to refrain from indulging in permanent hatred towards another people. Against this view it is urged—apart from the difficulty which no democracy has overcome, of finding a method by which the control of foreign relations may be exercised by the masses—that the multitude is just as liable to be swept away by passion, just as liable to be puffed up by national or racial pride, just as likely to covet the land or the commerce of other nations, as is any other class in the community. These things were seen in the popular governments of antiquity, and seen also in the (far less popular) republics of mediaeval Italy. The experience of modern democracy has been too short to warrant positive conclusions. The two countries most pacific in spirit are free democratic republics, but Switzerland has geographical as well as moral or philosophical reasons for keeping out of war, and the United States have been, since 1783, engaged in three wars, none of which can be called necessary, and one of which (that with Mexico in 1845) is now admitted, by Americans themselves, to have been scarcely justifiable. The sources of war are to be found not in constitutional arrangements but in human nature. They are ethical rather than political.

A third line of argument has been used to show that the extension of commerce, unfettered by any tariffs giving an advantage to the domestic producer, must give each country a larger interest in keeping the peace, because trade is profitable both to the seller and to the purchaser. The more trade the more profit, and therefore the stronger is the motive for continuing the exchange, and the wider are the opportunities for friendly intercourse and reciprocal knowledge.

This theory also has much to recommend it. Those who realize that they will lose by war ought to desire peace. But the doctrine which favours a free interchange of products has not in fact spread or thriven of late years. It appears to be less popular now, even in its ancient British home, than it was fifty years ago, which may indeed

be said of the theory of *laissez faire* generally. Most peoples, even the formerly self-helpful peoples, seem disposed to look more and more to governments to take charge of their affairs and to make the prosperity of individuals.

Fourthly, those who see that in some countries the increase in the functions of government and the tendency to sacrifice the individual to the State have been accompanied by the development of a martial and aggressive spirit conceive that the two things are naturally connected. When the State labours to increase the wealth of individual producers by the imposition of tariffs, and by helping its financiers to lay their grasp upon foreign countries, it is expected to go further and acquire new territories, especially if they be rich in minerals, and to open up or even create new markets outside Europe. It is only by military strength that such plans can be carried out. Hence—so the argument runs—militarism becomes popular with the great employers of labour, perhaps even with the employees. Military glory and the prosperity of the State are identified. Huge armaments are advocated for business reasons; and a people proud of its military resources is naturally tempted to use them. If, therefore, this doctrine of State omnipotence could be discredited, if the masses of a nation could be induced to revolt against the dominance of State officials and the extension of State activity, the antagonism of nations would be softened, and a fertile cause of war be reduced.

This reasoning finds support in recent experience, but there are at present few signs of any general revolt against the doctrines which the argument seeks to discredit. On the contrary, the range of State action tends, in almost every country, to be increased, various classes desiring it for their own special reasons, and a well-marked current of thought running in that direction. This does not prove that mankind will ultimately be the gainer by a tendency for the moment dominant, for history furnishes instances in which such currents, strong for a while, and sweeping everything before them, have in the long run turned out to have brought more evil than good.

Lastly, there are those who believe that we may look for the growth over the civilized world of a sentiment of friendliness and goodwill for men as men, irrespective of national distinctions, and that this sentiment will ultimately draw the peoples of the earth together and make them realize the conception of a great Commonwealth embracing all mankind, to which all will owe an allegiance higher than that which they bear to their own State and country. To create such a sentiment was of course part of the message of Christianity: and the sentiment has always found its chief support in

religious belief. But as it may exist, and has in some minds existed, apart from Christianity, it deserves to be separately mentioned. Is the sentiment likely to grow till it becomes strong enough to influence national policy? Has it in fact been growing?

To those of us who can look back for sixty years, it seems to be weaker now in most, perhaps in all, countries than it was then, as it was stronger then than it had been in the days when the horrible African Slave Trade was deemed an asset in commercial prosperity. But a lifetime is far too short a period from which to draw conclusions on such a matter. Within our own time we have seen among ourselves a great advance in the sense of responsibility of those to whom Fortune has been kind for those whom she has neglected. We see a more active sympathy and, despite class antagonisms, a stronger sense of brotherhood between the members of the same people. May not such a feeling spread into the wider field of international relations? We perceive that in the English-speaking countries, of which alone we can judge, there exists already a warmer and more general pity than was ever seen before for suffering of every kind in every country; and wherever over the world a cry is raised for help to the victims of some disaster by earthquake, flood, or storm, the response is prompt and generous. That the hatreds and horrors conspicuous to-day grieve us all the more because they seem to be a reversion to a dark and cruel past, is of itself a testimony to the progress which mankind had made, and raises in some minds the hope that what we see may be transient and the next change be for the better.

After thus enumerating these natural causes, if one may so call them, which have made or are making for war or for peace, it remains only to ask what prospect there is that the nations may by a conscious and united effort succeed in establishing some machinery whereby the likelihood of future wars may be at least diminished. No one can examine the wars that have sprung from the causes I have enumerated without perceiving that in the great majority of instances peace might have been kept, without dishonour to either party, and with material advantage to both, had there been more foresight of the consequences of war, and a real desire to avoid it. Many wars have been unjust, most have been unnecessary. Can any means be devised whereby the action of nations other than those two (or more) between whom the quarrel arises can be invoked to prevent the disputants from settling it by arms?

This is a very old problem. It was debated in the fourteenth century, when two great Italians, Dante Alighieri and his younger contemporary Marsilius of Padua, both saw in the authority of the

Roman Emperor the guarantee and indeed the only guarantee for the peace of a distracted world, as others had before their time found it in the spiritual jurisdiction of the Roman Bishop. Five centuries later the problem was again discussed by Immanuel Kant, and, a generation later, a feeble attempt at a solution was made by the Holy Alliance, on principles which foredoomed it to failure.

Both here and in the United States sanguine minds are now busy with plans which propose some kind of federation or league or alliance of nations charged with the duty of compelling disputant Powers to refer their disputes to arbitration or conciliation, and to abstain from violent measures, at least until these peaceful methods have had their chance. Such ideas can hardly be dismissed as visionary, since they have been blessed both in this country and in the United States by the highest authorities in public life. I do not propose here to discuss them, but may properly supplement what has been said regarding the causes of war by indicating what are the difficulties which all such schemes for the prevention of war have to surmount.

I will mention a few of these.

That statesmen of the old school will dislike new methods which may withdraw from them some of the control they have hitherto enjoyed must be expected. But far more serious is the deep-rooted unwillingness of every nation, and especially of a strong and proud nation, to submit any part of what it calls its rights to the decision of an external tribunal. This has been happily overcome in some recent instances, but in none of those instances were the interests involved of great moment: and even in the countries where arbitration has won most favour there is a feeling, hard to overcome, that the cession of territory is a question on which the country itself must always have the last word. In every nation the fact that statesmen and journalists seek to please their public by constantly asserting the righteousness of its own cause makes it hard to arrange reasonable compromises. An American statesman, than whom there is none wiser anywhere, recently observed that one of the greatest difficulties the negotiator of a treaty has to encounter is the displeasure of his fellow countrymen at any concession, even when he feels his own cause to be none too strong, and believes his country would gain by the removal of friction. Nations seem to be as sensitive on what is called the 'point of honour' as were members of the *noblesse* in France and England three centuries ago. They hold out against arrangements which individual men would accept. He who suggests the dropping of a doubtful claim is accused of timidity or want of patriotism.

When a nation is invited to reduce its defensive armaments in the faith that the other States which are uniting themselves in a Peace League will join their forces with its own to repel any aggression, doubts will arise whether the parties to any alliance for the preservation of peace can be trusted to fulfil their respective obligations except when it is their obvious interest to do so. Where several allied States are alike threatened by a powerful enemy, a regard for their safety will doubtless require them to hold together. But cases may easily be imagined in which some members of the League, having at a given moment nothing direct to gain by supporting a threatened ally, may, either through unwillingness to fight or through the offer of some advantage for themselves, be induced to find a pretext for standing aside. As soon as one member thus falters, some other member is likely to follow the example, alleging that if one or more fail to stand by the obligation, the rest cannot be expected to fulfil it. The ultimate benefit to all of mutual protection, and of the repression of any disturbance of the general peace, may be admitted. But in politics the avoidance of a near evil is usually preferred to the attainment of a more remote good, for all can recognize the former, and only those of large minds and long views can appreciate the latter.

Another difficulty has received little notice, because those who start these schemes, rejoicing in the excellence of their aim, sometimes forget to examine the means. It is the difficulty of securing persons competent to discharge the functions of Arbitration and Conciliation. Jurists versed in international law can be found fit to determine questions of a purely legal nature, such, for instance, as the interpretation of a treaty. Though there are not many such men in Europe, there may be enough for present needs. But the causes which most frequently lead to hostilities are not of a legal character. In extremely few cases out of all those in which disputes have led to war in Europe since 1815 could the judicial methods of an arbitral court have been profitably used.¹ War usually springs from questions of wider range, questions to which no precedents are precisely applicable, questions which involve the passions of rulers or of peoples. To these questions it is Conciliation, not Arbitration, that must be applied; and the conciliators who are to deal with them must be men possessing an intimate knowledge of European politics and a long experience in international statesmanship. They must enjoy

¹ The controversy as to the succession to the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein which arose on the death of Frederick VII of Denmark is such an instance. In that case the parties did not wish to arbitrate.

a reputation extending beyond their own country, and such as will add weight to their opinions. They must moreover possess sufficient independence and courage to follow their own views of what is right and wise at the risk of displeasing their countrymen. Few are the persons in whom these qualifications will be likely to meet.

It is better to state and face these obstacles than to ignore them with the complacent optimism which mistakes its own wishes for facts, or assumes that ethical precepts will prevail against the bad habits of many generations. But the obstacles are not insuperable. If the free peoples of the world really desired permanent peace, desired it earnestly enough to make it a primary object and to forego some of their own independence of action to attain it, the thing might be tried with a fair prospect of success. What is needed is the creation, not only of a feeling of allegiance to humanity and of an interest in the welfare of other nations as well as one's own—what in fact may be called an International Mind,—but also of an International Public Opinion, a common opinion of many peoples which shall apply moral standards to the conduct of other nations with a judgement biased less than now by the consideration of the particular national interests which each nation conceives itself to have.

Could such a moral *iudicium orbis terrarum* be established, it might do more than any arbitral tribunal, or Council of Conciliation, or combination of Powers, to raise the level of conduct in international relations, and restrain the selfish passions even of monarchs or demagogues. Though the nations are still some considerable way from the general diffusion of such a feeling and opinion, we need not assume that the waves of passion will continue to run so high as they do now, and we may even venture to hope that the sentiment of a common devotion to the common welfare of all mankind will, within the next few generations, gradually assert its strength.

This leads me to one more topic proper to be here referred to.

In comparison with all the other sadnesses of this time, with the sorrow and mourning that have entered every home, with the loss of those bright young spirits who would have been the leaders of the next generation, some among them minds that would have rendered incomparable services to learning and science and art—in comparison with these things the evil I am about to mention may seem small. Yet it is one that must be mentioned, for it directly affects the objects for which this Academy exists, and we, together with our friends and colleagues of the Royal Society, are those who best know how grave it is. I speak of the severance of friendly relations

between the great peoples of Europe, the interruption of all personal intercourse and of that co-operation in the extension of knowledge and the discovery of new truth from which every people has gained so much. The study of philosophy and history has done little for those of us who pursue it if it has not extended their vision beyond their own country and their own time, reminding them that human progress has been achieved by the united efforts of many races and many types of intellect and character, each profiting by the efforts of the others, and teaching them that for further advance this co-operation is essential. To restore it is at this moment impossible. But let us at least do nothing to retard its return in happier days. Those days some of us cannot hope ever to see. For the elder men among us there has come a perpetual end of that delightful and mutually helpful companionship which united us with the learned men of two other great nations, a sense of partnership between those who pursued truth which overrode all national jealousies, and was fruitful for the progress of letters and science. This partnership is gone; and the world will for years to come suffer from its departure. Yet the severance cannot last for ever. When a storm has levelled the forest or a waterspout has scarred the slopes of a valley, the eternal forces of Nature, slow and often imperceptible in their working, but restlessly active, begin to repair the ruin the storm has wrought. Young trees spring up to renew the forest, and verdure clothes once more the devastated hillsides.

Two years ago the Spirit of Sin and Strife was let loose upon the earth like a destroying whirlwind. That spirit is personified in the *Iliad* as Até, the Spirit of Evil that takes possession of the soul. She is the power that strides swiftly over the earth, kindling hatred and prompting men to wrong. But the poet tells us that after Até come the Litæ, gentle daughters of the Almighty, who, by their entreaties, soften men's hearts to pity. Halting are their steps and their visage wrinkled, and their look askance, but they bring repentance and they assuage the passions which the Spirit of Wrong has kindled. Até has been afoot in the world; and we see everywhere her deathful work. But after a time the Litæ, following slowly in her track, will begin to heal the wounds she has cut deep into men's souls. Nations cannot be enemies for ever. The time must come when a knowledge of the true sources of these calamities will, even there where hatred is now strongest, enlighten men's minds and touch their hearts. May that time come soon!

Ἀλλῖνον αἰλῖνον εἰπέ, τὸ δ' εὖ νικάτω.

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